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JEWISH IDEALS.¹

WE are all of us artists in life, and very poor daubs most of us make of it. If we were to examine into the causes of this failure, which by universal consent is more general now-a-days than ever before in the world's history, we should find it, I fancy, in the multiplicity of ideals which are being held up before us as exemplars. The truth is, we are carrying the principle of being all things to all men a little too far. We desire to be ascetic with the Buddhists, and natural with the Greeks, law-abiding as the Romans, and free as the French, socialistic like the early Christians, and individualistic as the modern Briton. Doubtless, in the millennium, all these diverse ideals will be reconciled and fused into one perfect ideal of society; but, alas, the millennium is not yet. Meanwhile the presentation of all these ideals in their most attractive colours only produces the effect of making them all seem equally true and equally false, or, at least, one-sided.

I may seem to be only helping to make confusion still more confounded by proposing this evening to bring before your notice another set of ideals for your sympathetic admiration. But I hope to show that this is not the case. For among the principles of ethical action which seem to me to underlie the Jewish conception of life, that of rigid fidelity to the system of ideals into which you are born is, perhaps, the most conspicuous. I say "seem to me," for you must not take anything I am about to say as authoritative statement of Jewish views of life. I doubt, indeed, whether there exists any authority competent to speak in the name of all Jews on the *rational* basis of Jewish ideals. For speaking on such a subject before this Society, I am debarred from all reference to the theological basis on which Jews found their claim to live the Jewish life. I believe that life is, to quote your charter of incorporation, "capable of rational justification," which is tacitly taken to mean: apart from theological suppositions. The justification I shall offer shall not transgress that proviso, but it thereby becomes only a personal one, and is only

¹ A Lecture delivered before the Ethical Society, Sunday, May 12th, 1889.

founded on many years of reflection and observation of the facts of Jewish life, literature, and history. I suppose I share, with most members of this Society, that curious nineteenth century attitude towards our ancestral creed in which we stand as it were outside ourselves and attempt to look at our ideals and aspirations with the eyes of others. But yet we remain ourselves, and true to ourselves, during the process, and if we observe any flaws in our ideals, it is as if we were scanning critically a dear mother, wife or daughter. We may recognise in her some lapse or deviation from our ideal of perfect beauty, but yet we love her—but yet we love her.

After these preliminaries, let us to our theme. I have spoken above of a “system of ideals,” and I wish first to develop that conception as a key to what I am to say further. When we examine any specific system of ethics—say the Buddhist or the Homeric, we are struck by the fact that in broad detail it almost exactly resembles our own. It was no discovery of the ancient Hebrews that man must not slay his fellow man, or forswear his faith, or steal what is not his own. No civil society could exist in which those principles were not recognised as binding. And what applies to the broader principles, applies in a large measure to the minor moralities. The content of the ethical code is everywhere among nations who can claim to be civilized practically the same. This is true of Judaism, even in its mediæval phases, when the terrible persecutions which Jews underwent might almost have justified anti-social interpolations. Jewish apologists have culled from Jewish writings of all time ethical maxims of the highest moral import, which vie in loftiness of spirit with those of the most favoured nations or creeds. A useful collection of these utterances has recently been compiled by a Jewish minister, the Rev. Morris Joseph, to whose *brochure, Jewish Ethics*,¹ I may refer those who doubt their existence, or who are otherwise interested in Jewish gnomic wisdom. For myself, I will venture to assume the practical identity of the contents of Jewish ethics with those of all the great religions, and am prepared in turn to grant the same to them.

I am more concerned to claim for Jews that they have been the first to grant this identity of the ethical principles adopted by humanity. I can illustrate this by a quotation from one of the few works written by Jews during the early middle ages in England, before they were expelled. Most of you will have read Browning's powerful poem “Rabbi Ben Ezra.” Mr.

¹ Published at the office of the *Jewish Chronicle*. It is also included in the volume on *Religions of the World*, published by Messrs. Sonnenschein & Co.

Browning was probably unaware that the hero of his poem, Abraham ibn Ezra, a Spanish Jew of great attainments, an astronomer, grammarian, Biblical critic, mathematician, and traveller, visited England in 1158, and while here wrote a book on the Foundations of Religion (*Yesod Mora*), in which occurs the following passage on the Laws of Moses:—

There is a fundamental law which commands us to observe all the divine enactments, positive and negative. This precept, "Ye shall serve the Lord your God" (Ex. xxiii. 25), includes all the laws to be kept by heart, word, or deed, whether primary laws or those serving to record them in memory. . . . Many commands have lost their force, as that of hyssop (Ex. xii. 22), of the manna (ib. xix. 11). . . . Some commands are imposed on the whole people, as burnt offering, shew-bread, libations: others belong to certain distinct families, as the duties of a prince, of a high priest, and the rest of the priests and Levites, the number of whose duties is very great. Several precepts are given to male and female indiscriminately; some to men alone, as the redemption of the first-born; others to women alone, as concerning vows.

. . . There are many laws relating to a certain time . . . but many laws depend neither on time nor anything else, and these are imposed on all, male and female, king, priests, rich and poor, Israelites and proselytes, whole and sick. There is one law for all, and such precepts are primary. These primary laws are ingrained in the mind . . . and were known by the power of the mind before the law was declared by means of Moses, and there are many of this kind as, e.g., those of the decalogue except the Sabbath: these were only repeated by Moses . . . There are also commanded certain pious works by which we are reminded of the primary precepts, as the observance of the Sabbath in memory of the creation of the world, Passover, unleavened bread, tabernacles, inscriptions on our doors, phylacteries of hand and head, fringes of garments. . . .

All the precepts are to be referred to three things (1) to piety of the heart, (2) to words, (3) to deeds. And as unity is contained in every number, so the beginning of every pious act by deed or word is internal piety, without which all worship is false and of none avail.

There are two points to which I wish to draw your attention in this passage. The first is the remarkable statement—remarkable, that is, for a mediæval writer—that the primary laws of morality are ingrained in the human heart, and are not due to revelation, so that all human beings are cognisant of them, and they are binding on all. This is put more clearly, perhaps, by Ibn Ezra than any other mediæval Jewish thinker; but it underlies all Jewish thought and practice. Combined with the principle that salvation rests on works, it leads at once and logically to the dictum, "The pious of all nations have a part in the world to come"—a sentence which comes upon most people as a surprise, as emanating from a creed which is supposed to be so exclusive and narrow. It likewise accounts for the absence of all proselytising zeal which is characteristic of Judaism, and comes equally as a surprise to most persons. The second point I will here only advert to, and that is the full recognition of the necessary inwardness of morality. That I will refer to later on; but at present I wish to emphasise the Jewish recognition of the substantial

identity of the ethical code of all nations. But while we allow that the raw materials of ethics are the same in all the great creeds or ethical systems, we are far from asserting that the way in which these materials are built up into the Jewish and into other systems of ethics is by any means identical. In the house of ethics there are many mansions: the bricks may be the same in each, but the order of architecture varies vastly. To any system of ethics we may address numbers of questions which can receive divers answers. To which of the virtues does it give most prominence? What motives does it hold out for the performance of duty? How does it propose to inculcate morality on its adherents? And, lastly, what general principles does it posit by which it welds all the elements of morality into one system of ethics? It is these general principles that I propose to deal with to-night, under the name of "Jewish Ideals," for want of a better.

The first and most striking of these—the one that occurs doubtless to most of you as the characteristic side of Jewish ethics, as you know it in the Old Testament and in the contests of the New—is the conception of *Morality as Law*. This involves the idea that the details of morality can be expressed verbally, and codified somewhat in the form of a legal code, and can be taught as such. The moral life in Jewish conception consists in conformity to such a law: sin consists in transgression of any of its enactments. Now, this is at first sight incongruous with much that you have been accustomed to hear in this Society. Whenever I have had the pleasure of listening to any of your lecturers, whatever the theme has been, the central conception has always been to put forth the ideal of Morality as Freedom. "The Good consists in the Good Will, and the Good Will is the Free Will;" that is the kind of formula with which you are here familiar. Or to put it in another way, it is the intention that makes the morality of the act, not the conformity with any moral law imposed from without. True, to that we are all agreed. You will remember that Abraham ibn Ezra, in the passage quoted above, was as emphatic on this point as the most advanced Kantian can be. But the further question arises: How are you going to create good intentions in the human subject? Jewish ethics replies by inculcating the practice of good actions in conformity with the moral law.

Here we come upon one of those differences of stress which constitute the divergences of various moral systems. Jewish ethics and Christian ethics agree in saying that good acts are desirable and that good intentions are praiseworthy. But each lays stress on a different member of the pair. Jewish

ethics says: Do good acts and you will feel good: Christian ethics says: Feel good and you will do good. The contrast is as old as the breach between the two Churches: you are familiar with it as the contrast between the Letter and the Spirit, a way of putting the distinction which scarcely does justice to the Jewish attitude, as is but natural in polemical pamphlets. I do not feel called upon to decide between the two contrasting principles of moral training. In putting before you the Jewish view I do not defend, I expound. But I would point out that the matter in dispute is a question of paedagogics: in inculcating morality we are *ex hypothesi* dealing with the young, and I fail to see how else we are to proceed with them than by training them to acts. Freedom if you like for adults, but moral law for the growing spirit. And the freedom that is ultimately to be obtained by this means is not absence of all control but willing obedience to a law self-imposed. *Frei und eins mit dem Gesetz*, as Berthold Auerbach put it. And in developing this relation between Morality as Freedom and Morality as Law, I fancy I but interpret that saying of the man who first brought out the contrast: "I come not to annul the Law but to fulfil it." Another great Jew, Spinoza, also founds his conception of man's freedom on the notion of law. So far as I understand the fourth and fifth books of his *Ethics*, perhaps the most difficult of all philosophical reading, he bases Freedom on Law and does not oppose it to Law. Just at present one of the great wants of the age is the recognition of this conception of Morality as Law. A friend of mine even goes so far as to urge that a distinct Moral Code should be drafted, for instruction to children. Without entering into the question how far this is practicable, I would point out that the idea is eminently a Jewish one. I would also point out that a large part of morality is already codified as Law, and there is a distinct tendency to increase this amount. A few years ago it was a moral act to inform purchasers that certain articles were made in Germany; now-a-days it is legally obligatory. I do not mean to infer that all moral acts should become Acts of Parliament: they would cease to be moral acts, pure and simple, then. The truly moral act is that which is not punished by the law if left undone and is thus performed for its own sake; and of this character are the enactments of the so-called Jewish Law, which has no sanction but the approval of conscience. There was a kind of customary morality in England under the old *régime*, which partook of the same character though it was not formally codified. This has almost entirely disappeared, and there is nothing taking its

place. Now customary and conventional morality may not be the highest type of morals, but it is surely better than nothing at all, and that is practically what the urban lower classes are coming to, who attend no Church and have no recognised authority in any moral problem. The Talmud, with all its casuistic minutiae, would be better than that state of things.

I have here incidentally touched upon the main charge that is brought against the idea of morality as law. There is in it a tendency to degrade moral acts into mere mechanical custom, as when prayer, the free intercourse between man and his Maker, may degenerate into a meaningless gabble or a custom like that of not eating pork may be raised to the same level as the moral principle of not telling lies. I will grant at once that there is this danger attaching to the Jewish conception of morality. But we have to reflect that the majority of men are creatures of habit, and only susceptible for the most part of a morality of conventions. Judaism accepts this fact and legislates for this class without at the same time preventing the rarer spirits from rising, as occasion serves, into the higher region of Morality as Freedom. Christianity battles strenuously against this tendency to convention which it calls the World, and enlists on its side the more enthusiastic spirits who form the noble army of its martyrs and saints. But it is only enabled to do this by crippling the free exercise of men's speculative powers, whereas Judaism leaves these almost entirely unfettered, and by the very exercise of legal controversy in moral matters tends to lay an almost exaggerated stress on intellect and its function in life. Each system, it will be seen, has its own disadvantages; Christianity fetters the intellect and fails to train the masses morally; Judaism tends to confuse morality, law and custom. The morality of the Jew may become merely conventional; the morality of the Christian may only result in gush.

Before I pass on, I would disabuse your minds of at least one misconception which clings about the Jewish idea of morality as law. And that is to regard the Law under the aspect of a burdensome yoke. As a matter of fact this is for the most part utterly erroneous, and is indeed incongruous with the other charge brought against Jewish morality of being conventional or customary. The Jewish child grows accustomed to the yoke, and so it ceases to be burdensome to the Jewish man. And in so far as the Law does demand some sacrifice from Jewish children, it performs a distinctly moral function as a training in self-restraint. At almost every

moment of its life, the Jewish child is taught to consider life a discipline, in which it has to learn to give up some of its selfish inclinations for the sake of a principle. The conception of the Jewish Law as a yoke is thus a distinctly moral principle.

Meanwhile, we may now direct a somewhat closer scrutiny at the Law with which morality is identified in Jewish conceptions. For practical purposes, it was sufficiently characterised and analysed in the extract from Abraham ibn Ezra, which has hitherto formed our text. The Law consists of (1) the primary laws of morality, (2) customs associated with certain seasons, and (3) customs commemorative of certain events. Now we have already seen that it is a characteristic of the Jewish system of ethics to raise these customs to the same level as the primary laws of morals. The grounds adduced for this by Jewish authorities are theological, and with these we are not at liberty to deal. But apart from theology, a fair case may be made out for the worship of

Old Use and Custom, sisters grey,

as Lord Tennyson calls them in a passage that points to a defence of custom as a foster-sister of morality. The utility of custom in the moral life, it seems to me, is to create a fund of tender emotion which will be at the service of the moralities. The abuse of custom as we all know is its tendency to harden into superstition. The dislocation of custom among the English peasantry illustrates both. They are less superstitious but less considerate for others than they were in older days. Jewish customs also illustrate both, but I desire to regard them as illustrating the second great Jewish ethical principle, which differentiates it from others, and that is what I should term the *Holiness of Home*.

By Holiness I mean something specific and intimately connected with those customs of which we have just been speaking. I mean the association of certain times and seasons in the Jewish home with certain ceremonial customs regarded as sacred. These ceremonies become "object lessons" in religion and in morality. They are interesting historically in many ways, to two of which I wish to call your attention. A wicked wit has called Judaism a "religion of survivals;" and the epigram is the more biting since it contains the proverbial half-truth, though not in this instance the better half of truth. The dietary laws have been plausibly explained as a survival of totemism; the rite of Abraham is still practised by a majority of the non-civilised races; the objection to intermarriage is known elsewhere as the rule of endogamy, and

much of Jewish fidelity to faith and kindred bears a suspicious resemblance to ancestor-worship. The probabilities are that in their origin these were all savage, or as we used to term them, idolatrous customs, and it was the policy of the Mosaic legislators to raise these to a higher power, to use a mathematical expression, by connecting them, as they are now connected, with a purer faith. Just at present, however, I wish to point out that in the Judaic conception of the Holiness of the Home, there has been raised to a higher power the most moral and most touching side of the ancient religions. When we think of the noble and dignified type of character produced in the Greek and Roman world, we may be sure that there was something more in their religion than mere external pageantry and impure idolatry. And that purer side of their religion was represented by the worship of the Penates, or ancestral gods, of which we know but little in detail, but which clearly dominated the whole home life of the ancients, and, as has been shown by M. Fustel de Coulanges, was made the basis of their social organisation. Not a meal, not a family meeting occurred which was not ushered in by a solemn libation to the spirits of the ancestors who were conceived to be present and sanctified the whole of the home. Judaism preserves this noble trait of the ancient world with the difference of regarding the spirit that is present and is invoked as the spirit of all flesh, the Divine Majesty of the Universe. It is impossible to describe to those who have not experienced it, the feeling of holy joy which is diffused throughout the humblest Hebrew home, by the solemn repetition of acts which in themselves may be regarded as mere customs, without vital connection with the souls of men. In speaking thus, I am not thinking of the so-called upper classes of Jews, who aim at an electro-plate imitation of the manners of their neighbours, and think it "cultured" to drop these customs. I refer more particularly to the home-life of the ordinary Jewish artisan, even of the poor Polish Jews, who have in other respects been degraded by ages of persecution, but in this particular, possess a dignity in their homes which is not shared by those of their neighbours which are quite free from "survivals," even of decency.

This aspect of Jewish morality is perhaps more familiar to you than any other, because it is that in which English life has been most deeply affected by Hebraic conceptions as represented by the Bible. And the particular institution in which it is embodied most characteristically, both for Jews and Christians, is that of the Sabbath. I do not know how it has come about—or rather, I do know, but

cannot linger to discuss—that a “Judaic Sabbath” means a day of austere gloom. As a matter of fact, it is the one bright spot in the Jewish life. Heine, to the last a Hebrew of the Hebrews in his severer moods, has written a beautiful poem about the Princess Sabbath, in which Israel has been condemned by a wicked fairy to wander about during the week as a hound, but on Sabbath is transformed once more into human shape, and resumes his natural dignity. All is joy and good humour in the Jewish home on the Friday night, when Sabbath “comes in.” I would attribute a good deal of the difference between the Jewish and the Christian Sabbath to the seemingly mechanical difference that the one begins and ends at an hour when its advent or exit can be solemnised by ceremonial, whereas the other comes and goes, if I may use the phrase, “as a thief in the night.” Curiously enough, the other work, written by the Rabbi Ibn Ezra while in England, was an elaborate defence of the Eastern method of beginning the day with the eve. It is indeed to the Sabbath primarily, and the other home ceremonials which embody the Hebraic conception of the Holiness of the Home, that we can trace the remarkable persistence of the Jewish race through the ages. This is generally spoken of as due to their fidelity to their faith, and so on; but we have to seek for the social institutions in which that faith was embodied before we can adequately understand the attraction it had for its adherence. Life itself seemed to the Jew little worth having without the Holiness of Home, to which he had been accustomed from his early days, and which kept its attraction even for the arch-scoffer Heine.

We may now pass to a third leading principle that dominates Jewish ethics, which we may call its Messianic tone, due to the idea of the *Mission of Israel*. In speaking of the hallowing of custom, which forms so large a part of the Jewish discipline, I should have said that it not only strengthens family love, the nurse of all the moralities, but it forms a bond of common custom between family and family, and between Jews of one country and those of another. But a bond for what? it may be asked. Is Judaism a mere trades union designed to promote the benefit of its members against the competition of others who are not “on the statement,” as the trade phrase runs? It would seem as if the anti-Semites thought so, and so far as their criticisms touch Jews who have lost the Messianic hope, their view might seem to be justified. But these are just the Jews who are not under the influence of the bond of custom, which they have mostly thrown off. The mass of Jews are still influenced by the Messianic hopes, and

keep up their separateness from others and their bonds with one another under the influence of the conviction that there is a Divine mission for Israel to play in the world's history. The conviction is somewhat vague and indefinite ; some look forward to a personal Messiah and a political future, others anticipate a Messianic age and a spread of Hebraic conceptions and Jewish ideals. But a hope need not be the less vivid because it cannot be expressed in a formula, or rather I would say the more clear and definite you make it, the nearer it is to its last hour. Judaism is here at one with the last and greatest of the philosophers, Hegel, in regarding "abstraction" as the least vital form of thinking and of aspiration. The moment you can reduce your ideal to a formula, you may prepare for its funeral, or you may as well nail it at once to your barn-door as a scarecrow ; it has no more vitality left in it, no further potentialities of development. To come back from this abstract way of looking at the matter, the very thing against which I am inveighing, I would remark that a hope that is vague is one that cannot be disappointed, and can therefore live on through all vicissitudes of fortune, as the Messianic hope has done in Israel.

I feel a difficulty of speaking of this Jewish ideal under the limits I have imposed upon myself of speaking without reference to any theological conceptions. But I would remark that there is no reason why a similar conception could not be adopted by all nations. What, indeed, is involved in the conception of a nationality but the profound conviction of its members that they have developed a special type of character which peculiarly fits them for some special function in the development of humanity ? Would that England were more conscious of some Divine mission to perform in the world's history ! Once it was Protestantism that gave enthusiasm to the majority of Englishmen, the eradication of slavery has still some of the vitality of an ideal, and even the latter-day apology for a mission, "Peace on earth and Free Trade among men" can still rouse Englishmen's energies on behalf of an ideal. Even if the mission turn out to be an illusion, I say it is better for men to have an illusory ideal than none at all. Puritanism braced up Englishmen's souls, though its ideals have crumbled away under the assaults of modern thought and sentiment. Acute observers are of opinion that the only hope of raising France from the Slough of Despond is in keeping alive the seemingly futile hope of the *Révanche*. And reverting to Israel one feels that the only thing that idealises the too often prosaic figure of the modern Jew is the halo of the Divine promises to which he still clings, and so justifies

his separateness from the rest of mankind. Consider what dignity is given to the function of maternity when every Jewish mother may feel the hope that from her may issue one who will restore moral peace to mankind.

Underlying the whole conception, or presenting another aspect of it, is the fourth Jewish ideal of the *Hallowing of History*. Here again I am hampered by my own bonds, and am prevented from describing this in the shortest way as the recognition of God in History. But looking at the matter merely on psychological grounds, this conception is the recognition of the fact that man is made man by history. It is history that, as represented by its medium language, differentiates man from the brute. It is history that causes the men of the historic nations to be more civilised than the savage. The Jew recognises practically, if not consciously, that he is made what he is by the history of his fathers, and feels he is losing his better self so far as he loses his hold of his past history, for he regards himself as having gone through the vicissitudes of his fathers. Many of the customary ceremonials which make up the holiness of the Jewish home are purely history raised into religion. One of them, the Passover, has passed over into Christianity as its most sacred function, still retaining survivals of its historic origin and connections ; the wine and wafer of the Mass (or Communion) representing the wine and unleavened bread still tasted by Jews at the inaugural banquet of the Passover Service. At one part of the ceremonial, which is mainly made up of the story of the Exodus, it is remarked : "Every Jew should regard himself as if he had personally come out of Egypt." That spirit dominates the whole of Jewish life and ceremonial.

Here, again, I see no reason why the Judaic conception of history should not be adopted and adapted by all nations that have a history. The idea of giving history a continued life in ceremonial has altogether died out among modern nations, and especially among Englishmen, where its only survival is "Guy Fawkes' Day." A distinct loss of national dignity results from this, and we may notice that the virtue of patriotism no longer holds the place it once did in the hierarchy of English virtues. Some years ago the question was raised, "Can Jews be patriots ?" implying, Could Jews feel themselves at once Jews and Englishmen ? The answer is that the very reason that makes an English Jew conscious of his Judaism makes him equally conscious that he is an Englishman. For certain sides of his character and ideals he feels his indebtedness to his Jewish parentage and breeding ; other sides, his freedom as a citizen, his language, and the intellectual acquirements

that go with it, he feels he owes to his position as an English citizen.

Before leaving this side of the subject, I would remark on certain corollaries on the Messianic Ideal and the Hallowing of History that have a characteristic bearing on Jewish ethics. These have a distinctly moralising effect by making the ideal of each individual something other than himself—in the first place his co-religionists, and in the final issue humanity. The unit is the family, which is a permanence; hence the pertinacity and patience with which Jews have borne the tribulations of ages, buoyed up by the Messianic hopes. "If not in my time, at least in that of my children," thinks many a Jewish parent. This idea has results not so desirable from an economic point of view in the early marriages of Jews and their all too numerous results. It concentrates, too, attention on this world as the true field of the Divine drama. Jews escape by this means "other-worldliness," it is true; but I doubt whether that is so much inferior to "this-worldliness" to which Jews are thereby restricted. There is finally involved an optimistic conception of the world which is in reality involved in every Theistic conception. That can be no good God who has made, or who rules, a world radically evil. But here again I am trenching on the province of the theologian.

I have now called your attention to the four chief principles on which Judaism deals with the material of ethics, and works them up into a specific Jewish ethics—the ideas of Morality as Law, the Holiness of Home, the Mission of Israel, and the Hallowing of History. If there were time, I might show how these are interconnected together into an organic system, and may be ultimately resolved into the first and last—morality as law and the hallowing of history. But I prefer to look at the subject from another point of view, and exhibit the organic character of Jewish ethics as shown in its subjective aspects. "We live by admiration," says Wordsworth; and by the imitation that expresses our admiration, we may add. By holding up certain ideals before men's eyes you create certain types of character which differ morally, not by any difference in the contents of the moral code, but by emphasis on different parts in it, and by special selection of the various virtues by which morality can be realised. Such a type of character is an organic one; you cannot lop off one ideal and suppose the rest of the character to remain the same. You cannot change the relative importance of the characteristic virtues without modifying the whole system; you cannot get the heart to perform the functions of the brain. Now each nation and each religion tends to develop its special type; there is a

distinct English character, and even an ideal of a specific Christian character, and so there is a special Jewish type of character. I suppose if we were to hit upon the pet virtue of an Englishman, it would be justice ; and, similarly, the most prominent characteristic at which the Jewish character seems to aim is fidelity to race and religion. In other words, the Jew stands up for differentiation in character. It is not his ideal that all men should be alike in character just at present, and in the practical expression of that aim he lives and dies.

This is the much abused separateness of the Israelite which brings down upon him the ill-will of nearly the whole world. Strangely enough the opposition comes most strongly from those new-fledged patriots of Germany and Austria, who insist most strenuously on the need of living up to a specific German or Austrian ideal of character. Or rather not strangely, for it is a necessary element of a specific national character that it feels opposition to any rival ideal. The interesting point to observe is that what these gentlemen object to in the Jewish character is not its too great narrowness, but its cosmopolitanism. Indeed, it is generally characteristic of Jews to confound their accusers in this way. While Christians have preached humility and forgiveness of enemies for centuries, Jews have been content to practise those virtues, the former rather laxly, perhaps, but the latter in all its fulness. And so while the Austrian is preaching the necessity of all men becoming brothers ("German cousins" they really mean) the Austrian Jews have no more than taken him at his word, in feeling an interest in the rest of the world, even though it be but a portion of that remainder.

At the beginning of this lecture I promised you a "rational justification" for the Jewish ideals which I was about to present to you, and you may think I shall be hard put to it to find a justification from a universalist standpoint for this one of Jewish separateness. Not at all. That remaining apart of Jews, while still joining in all the world's work that is unsectarian and beneficial, is fully justified by the great danger that begins to loom before us as never before in the world's history. I refer to a process which is best exemplified in the Chinese Empire, and which I would therefore call *Chinesism*. This is the tendency among huge masses of people to crush individuality, and reduce all its members to one dead level of mediocrity. The ideals of such a mass are formed, its type of character fixed, and for it there rests no more hope of progress either in elevation of ideal or ennobling of character. Its individual members may live happy lives, but from that mass the world has nothing to hope for in moral teaching.

Something of this kind is beginning to be noticed in the United States of America. In Europe, too, there are signs of the creation of a European type, to which we shall all conform. One of the outward signs of this, which all artists lament, is the spread of the chimney-pot hat and black cloth coat throughout Europe, and even in joyous Japan, displacing the picturesque and characteristic national dresses. In one hundred years things will be worse; there will then remain only five or six types of human character, out of which the final human character can develop. The nationalist movements of this century have been unconscious protests against this tendency of things. Now, the evil of this is that whenever a distinct ideal or specific type of character is crushed out, the resultant human type that seems so rapidly approaching will be so much the less rich and varied. This then is why the Jews, ay, or the Irish, or the Japanese, should be allowed and encouraged to preserve any characteristic they have which differentiates them from the great masses of humanity whose characters are becoming ossified. Suppose for a moment that the whole 100,000 Jews of Great Britain were made, to-morrow, completely indistinguishable from the rest of Englishmen, what advantage would accrue to humanity from the transformation? Is it not possible that the English character might have thereby lost the chance of being enriched at a favourable moment by one or other of the specific Jewish ideals that I have put before you?

Of course, there are disadvantages connected with the present state of things—disadvantages, mark you, which fall upon Jews for the most part, and not on the peoples among whom they dwell. One of these disadvantages I consider a serious one, though it seems at first sight somewhat ludicrous. I refer to the vanity which is almost necessarily involved in keeping alive the feeling of special mission. I fear, however, that it is necessary in the present state of human nature. If you are to believe in your ideals and in your ideal character, you must believe in yourself, and have the courage of your self-opinion. I have myself blown a somewhat loud fantasia on the Hebraic horn, with variations of my own. Not that I could not have introduced a few discordant notes. There are lapses in every ideal, or we should have reached the end of our tether in idealisation. The cumbrousness of the Jewish code, the obsolete character of some of its customs, the theoretical injustice done to woman, and other points might be adduced. But, with your permission, I prefer putting these, if I have an opportunity, before my own community. To you it would do no good to rehearse them. I have preferred putting before you those points of Jewish ethics which in my opinion

it would be well if they could be adopted into other national systems.

"If, then, you believe so strongly in your ideals, why do you not strive to spread them among the nations?" is the final retort you will have for me. To that the reply is, that character ideals and types can only be spread by living up to them, and thus prompting to admiration and imitation by others. Of course, if Judaism and the Jewish ideals were mere matters of faith, one could spread them by preaching. Truths or untruths of the intellect can be spread abroad by preachments, but not ideals of character. If now and again a Jewish thinker were to give to an Ethical Society a rose-coloured picture of the Jewish ideals, I doubt if the characters of the members, already formed as they are, would be much modified, unless possibly in their home life they aimed at adapting the Jewish ideals for the benefit of those coming after. Character cannot be passed from person to person in neat little parcels wrapped up in brown paper. It is only by working out your own character to the highest pitch of which it is capable that you can influence the characters of others, especially of the young. Jewish practice in this regard has the countenance of two great German thinkers. Kant, who lived the most non-human life of any mortal that ever breathed, and by his very detachment from life was enabled to see most clearly and profoundly into it, declared that you can directly aid a man's happiness, but he must work out his perfection for himself. So, too, Goethe, who lived perhaps one of the most human and natural lives ever passed by men, gives the same moral in the mystical final scene of his *Faust*. The soul of Faust is handed over to the care of the spirit of Margaret, who earnestly asks how she is to conduct him to the highest peaks. "Go up higher; he will follow thee," is the response—simple words, but there is the whole philosophy of human fellowship in them.

No; I see nothing for it but that each should live up to the highest that he himself can grasp, trusting that in the final issue the supreme highest will prevail, and hoping that his ideal will at least form a part of the final aim of humanity. Ideals have their life and development, and, as with all life, development depends on conflict, which subjectively means renunciation. We should not be disheartened while the conflict goes on, since the longer it lasts the higher the final stage of development. Meanwhile, in the strife of creeds and ideals, all we can ask for, and give, is a fair field and no favour. Let each man bear himself as bravely as he may, and let the battle-cry be, as of old, "God for us all!"

JOSEPH JACOBS.